

### **Listing of the Claims**

1. **(Previously Amended)** A method of protecting a silica-containing article used in the manufacture of an optical fiber, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a silica-containing article used in the manufacture of an optical fiber;  
applying a protective organic layer to the silica-containing article;  
removing, by cleaning, particulates from the protective layer; and  
ablating by heating the protective layer during subsequent processing of the silica-containing article.

2. **(original)** The method of claim 1, wherein the protective layer is applied to a consolidated glass surface.

3. **(canceled)**

4. **(previously presented)** The method of claim 2, wherein the protective layer leaves essentially no detrimental inorganic residue after the step of ablating.

Claims 5 through 9 **(canceled)**

10. **(previously presented)** The method of claim 1, wherein the protective layer includes at least one of a water soluble polymer, a thermoplastic polymer, a latex based polymer, a thermoset polymer, and a UV curable polymer.

11. **(previously presented)** The method of claim 1, wherein the organic material forms a self-assembled monolayer on the silica-containing article.

12. **(previously presented)** The method of claim 1, wherein the organic material includes at least one of hydrocarbon silane, fluorocarbon silane, epoxy functional silanes, acrylate functional silane, amine functional silane, thiol functional silane, phenyl functional silane, an alkyl and aryl ammonium compound, acrylate polymer, polyvinyl alcohol, and a wax.

13. **(canceled)**

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the step of removing particulates is accomplished by

- wiping with a substrate containing isopropyl alcohol;
- blowing with super critical CO<sub>2</sub>; or
- rinsing in liquid water.

15. (canceled)

16. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the silica-containing article includes one of a core cane and a core blank used in an outside vapor deposition process.

17. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the silica-containing article includes a glass tube used in an inside vapor deposition process.

18. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the silica-containing article is a fiber preform from which an optical fiber can be drawn and the protective layer is applied directly onto the fiber preform.

19. (original) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of drawing an optical fiber from the fiber preform.

20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein the protective layer ablates during drawing of an optical fiber from the fiber preform.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, wherein the protective layer leaves essentially no detrimental inorganic residue after ablating.

Claims 22 through 27 (canceled)

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the organic material forms a self-assembled monolayer on the fiber preform.

Claims 29 through Claim 31 (canceled)

**32. (previously presented)** The method of claim 18, wherein the fiber preform is formed by adding additional soot materials by an outside vapor deposition process onto a core cane and a core blank, the method further comprising the steps of applying a protective layer to at least one of the core cane and the core blank and removing particulates from the protective layer on the at least one of the core cane and the core blank prior to to the step of ablating.

**33. (previously presented)** The method of claim 18, wherein the fiber preform is formed by an inside vapor deposition process from a silica-containing tube, the method further comprising the steps of applying a protective layer to the silica-containing tube and removing particulates from the protective layer on the silica-containing tube prior to to the step of ablating.

**34. (withdrawn)** An intermediate product used in the manufacture of an optical fiber and protected against break-inducing particulates, the intermediate product comprising:  
a silica-containing article; and  
a protective layer.

**35. (withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the protective layer can be removed before subsequent processing of the intermediate product.

**36. (withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the protective layer can be ablated during subsequent processing of the intermediate product.

**37. (withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 36, wherein the protective layer leaves essentially no detrimental inorganic residue after ablating.

**38. (withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the protective layer inhibits bonding of particulates to the silica-containing article.

**39. (withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 38, wherein the protective layer inhibits bonding by occupying active sites on the silica-containing article such that particulates cannot bond to those active sites.

40. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 39, wherein the active sites include groups that will form a  $\text{SiMO}_x$  compound, where M is a metal.

41. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 38, wherein the protective layer includes carbon.

42. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 38, wherein the protective layer includes an organic material.

43. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 42, wherein the protective layer includes at least one of a water soluble polymer, a thermoplastic polymer, a latex based polymer, a thermoset polymer, and a UV curable polymer.

44. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 42, wherein the organic material forms a self-assembled monolayer on the silica-containing article.

45. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 42, wherein the organic material includes at least one of hydrocarbon silane, fluorocarbon silane, epoxy functional silanes, acrylate functional silane, amine functional silane, thiol functional silane, phenyl functional silane, an alkyl and aryl ammonium compound, acrylate polymer, polyvinyl alcohol, and a wax.

46. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the silica-containing article includes a fiber preform from which an optical fiber is drawn.

47. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the silica-containing article includes one of a core cane and a core blank used in an outside vapor deposition process.

48. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the silica-containing article includes a glass tube used in an inside vapor deposition process.

49. **(withdrawn)** The intermediate product of claim 34, wherein the protective layer is applied to a consolidated glass surface.

50. **(previously presented)** A method of protecting a silica-containing article used in the manufacture of an optical fiber, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a silica-containing article used in the manufacture of an optical fiber; and  
style="padding-left: 40px;">applying a protective layer consisting essentially of a silane to a consolidated glass surface of the silica-containing article.

51. **(previously presented)** The method of claim 50, wherein the silane includes at least one of a hydrocarbon silane and a fluorocarbon silane.

52. **(previously presented)** The method of claim 50, wherein the silane includes at least one of epoxy functional silanes, acrylate functional silane, amine functional silane, thiol functional silane, and phenyl functional silane.

53. **(previously presented)** A method of protecting a silica-containing article used in the manufacture of an optical fiber, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a silica-containing article used in the manufacture of an optical fiber; and  
style="padding-left: 40px;">applying a protective layer consisting essentially of an alkyl ammonium compound, an aryl ammonium compound, or a wax to a consolidated glass surface of the silica-containing article.

**Claims 54 through 57 (canceled)**

58. **(previously presented)** A method of protecting a silica-containing preform used in the manufacture of an optical fiber, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a silica-containing preform used in the manufacture of an optical fiber;  
style="padding-left: 40px;">applying a protective organic layer to the silica-containing preform;  
style="padding-left: 40px;">removing, by cleaning, particulates from the protective layer; and  
style="padding-left: 40px;">ablating by heating the protective layer during subsequent drawing of the silica-containing preform.